

WATER BAPTISM BIBLE STUDY

What is Water Baptism?

The word baptism comes from the Greek word baptizo which means *to immerse or dip*. To baptize something, then, means *to completely submerge it in a liquid*. In a biblical sense, to baptize a person in water means *to put that person completely under the water, then immediately raise him or her up again*.

According to the Bible, water baptism is a symbolic act whereby a new Christian identifies with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Water baptism is a public profession of a person's repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and a way of giving outward testimony to an inward work of God.

What Does Water Baptism Signify?

When God baptizes you into Christ, you become a new creation in your *spirit*, not in your *body* (flesh). Your body remains corruptible until the Resurrection (John 6:39-40), but something inside changes. Your heart is washed clean by the blood of Jesus, and your spirit is quickened (made alive) by the Holy Spirit. You now have the ability to communicate with God, hear His voice, love and obey Him, overcome sin, and walk out your salvation by faith.

Therefore, water baptism symbolically identifies us as new creations in Christ. By going down in the water, we illustrate that our old man is dead to sin and buried by faith in Christ. As a result, we are free from our old master Satan. By being raised up out of the water, we show that our new man is raised by the Spirit and made alive by faith in Christ. Since our new Master is the Lord Jesus, we commit to walk in righteousness (not by our old ways and fleshly habits but by our new life in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling our spirit). *“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” Romans 8:11 (ESV).*

Is Baptism Necessary?

- A. To win God's favor or earn acceptance? NO.
 - Rom. 4:2-5
 - Rom. 11:6

- B. For spiritual regeneration or salvation? NO
 - John 3:5
 - Some interpret "water" to mean "water-baptism," but best interpreted as physical birth when "water breaks."

- C. To become a Christian? NO
 - A Christian is one in whom Christ dwells spiritually. Rom. 8:9
- D. To be part of the Church of Jesus Christ? NO
 - Some churches require baptism to be part of their organization, but this is not biblical. I Cor. 12:13

Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation?

The Bible tells us that there *is* a baptism necessary for salvation; however, it is *not* water baptism! A person must be spiritually baptized into Christ in order to be saved: “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” **Galatians 3:27 (ESV)**. At the moment of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Yeshua), a person is “*having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.*” **Colossians 2:12 (ESV)** Many people insist that water baptism is essential for salvation. However, this is incorrect. You see, salvation is and always has been about faith in Jesus Christ. You must be "baptized into Christ" in order to be saved; however, this is not the same as being "baptized in water." Water baptism is purely an outward sign of God's cleansing work in a person's heart, and is therefore meaningless without a prior spiritual baptism into Christ.

Is Water Baptism Important?

As a first step of obedience in walking out one's faith, a new Christian should most definitely be water baptized because the Bible commands it! Furthermore, water baptism helps new believers understand the spiritual truth that according to their faith, their old man is dead in Christ and their new man is alive in Christ. “*We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*” **Romans 6:6 (ESV)**

Who Should Be Water Baptized?

Water baptism is only appropriate for those who have repented of their sins and believed in Jesus with all of their heart. A biblical example comes from Acts 8:36-38 (ESV). “*And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.*”

Disciples of Jesus in the New Testament church were baptized to proclaim their total allegiance and commitment to Jesus, regardless of the consequences. For a first century Christian, this meant identifying with Christ even unto death, since many of them faced severe persecution.

Let's look at some other examples of water baptism in the New Testament:

- John the Baptist baptized those who would repent (Mark 1:5).
- On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 new believers were baptized (Acts 2:41).
- The Samaritans that believed were baptized (Acts 8:12).
- Paul was baptized three days after he met Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:18).
- Cornelius and some other Gentiles were baptized (Acts 10:47).
- Lydia and her household were baptized (Acts 16:15).
- The Philippian jailer and his household were baptized (Acts 16:33).
- Many Corinthians were baptized (Acts 18:8).
- The Ephesian disciples were baptized (Acts 19:5).

All the biblical accounts agree: water baptism is for those who believe. *“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*
Mark 16:16 (ESV)

Yes, even a child who is old enough to understand the significance of repentance and faith in Jesus can be baptized. Water baptism demonstrates obedience to the command of Jesus (Matthew 28:19) and gives evidence of saving faith (James 2:22).

Is it biblical to baptize a baby?

No, there is no scriptural basis for infant baptism. How can you be baptized into One on Whom you do not believe? Baptism is an act of faith by one who chooses to identify his life with Christ, and a baby is not yet able to make such a choice.

Is it okay to be baptized more than once?

A new believer should be baptized once in obedience to the command of Jesus. Some people, however, may have been baptized earlier in their life (such as in the case of infant baptism) without understanding the significance of baptism, or perhaps they did not truly repent and receive Jesus as their Savior. In such cases it is very important to be re-baptized as a public profession of faith.

Also, a backslider (prodigal son) who has returned to Jesus may want to be baptized again, which is appropriate as long as he understands it is not necessary for his salvation and will not make him any more spiritual than someone who was baptized once. Remember that water baptism itself does not save anyone; rather, water baptism is a public, outward demonstration of a person's repentance and saving faith.

CONCLUSION

Water baptism is a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Although water baptism in itself does not save, it does identify us with Christ: “*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*”
1 Corinthians 12:13 (ESV)

When God baptizes you into Christ, you become part of the Body of Christ, which is the worldwide family of God. Thus, water baptism is not a meaningless ritual or even a mere duty; it is an awesome privilege for the child of God.

A FEW PRACTICAL TIPS ...

What should I do to prepare for the Baptism Service?

- ✓ Prepare yourself spiritually by prayer, meditating on the Scriptures pertaining to Water Baptism and through confession all sin to God.
- ✓ Invite family and friends to witness your baptism.
- ✓ Prepare a *brief* testimony about how you came to Christ or of your intention to live for Christ. You will be given opportunity to share this before you are baptized.

What should I bring to the Baptism Service?

- ✓ If wearing a bathing suit please wear something very modest. You can also wear casual clothes that you don't mind getting wet with a bathing suit underneath.
- ✓ Bring a towel to dry off.
- ✓ Bring a dry change of clothes. It might be cold out there following the service.

How will I be Water Baptized?

- ✓ Some people get nervous about the *process* of Water Baptism. There is no need for this if you understand that the process is quite simple. We don't want this to distract you from the blessing of this beautiful spiritual step in your life.
- ✓ You will be asked to share your brief story (when and how you gave your life to Jesus Christ). The person baptizing you will then ask you to hold your nose with one hand and your elbow with your other hand. When you are tipped backward, please bend your knees, this helps the person doing the baptizing. You will be submerged just enough to cover your face and then brought back up immediately.

*I am so happy that you are taking this step to publicly proclaim your faith in Christ!
May God richly bless you as you follow Him in Water Baptism!*